Chapter XII

Educational Portals: A Way to Get an Integrated, User-Centric University Information System

Marko Bajec
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract

Portal-based solutions have been proved in practice to be a promising technology that offers companies a way to transform and integrate their information systems more effectively and at lower cost. The main point of this paper is to discuss the use of portals in institutions of higher education. We examine the motivating factors that drive higher-education institutions to use portal-based solutions. As an example, we explain how the University of Ljubljana is taking advantage of portal technology and what benefits are to be expected from the use of portals as core components of the university’s new user-centric information system.

This chapter appears in the book, Web Portals: The New Gateways to Internet Information and Services, edited by Arthur Tatnall. Copyright © 2005, Idea Group Inc. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of Idea Group Inc. is prohibited.
Introduction

Over the past few years portals have become popular in the information system community. Even though there is no common definition, many would agree a portal could be described as a single, personalized interface through which users access all information resources and services in a secure, consistent and customisable manner. As described by Gerry Murray (1999) from International Data Corporation, “Portals connect users not only with everything they need, but also with everyone they need, and provide all the tools they need to work together.”

As in many areas, portals have also become of interest in higher-education institutions. Almost all universities are either developing or purchasing portal solutions for their needs (see, e.g., Cunin, Lacombe, Desnos, & Lenne, 2002; Gartner Group, 2002a; Haselbacher, 2002; Río, Taboada, Flores, & Gómez-Sobradelo, 2002; Shaw, Strachan, McCauley, & McCrae, 2002). A good example is the Portal Framework Project funded by Java Special Interest Group (JA-SIG), which joins over 20 universities and colleges with an aim to develop a free, sharable portal for higher-education institutions (Gartner Group, 2000b; Olsen, 2000).

The main objective of this chapter is to discuss motivating factors that drive higher-education institutions to use portal-based solutions as essential parts of their information systems. As an example, the paper describes how the University of Ljubljana is taking advantage of portal technology and how the university is expecting to benefit from portal-based solutions in its new integrated, user-centric university information system (UIS). According to the IT/IS strategy plan that the university had developed to start the renovation of its legacy information system, several development projects have been started, among which some are based on portal technology. We have now reached the closing phase of the first portal project, which gives us an opportunity to discuss some of the important issues regarding the implementation of portal-based solutions in view of our experiences gathered through the development.

The chapter is organized as follows: after providing some background on portal technology, in particular considering its value for higher-education institutions, the main reasons that led the University of Ljubljana into renovation of its current information system and consequently into incorporation of the portal solutions are explained. Next, the results of the IT/IS strategy plan are examined, emphasising the architecture that was designed as a backbone for
Adaptation and Recommendation in Modern Web 2.0 Portals
www.igi-global.com/article/adaptation-recommendation-modern-web-portals/3029?camid=4v1a